

children

Greedy slum machine a death-trap for children

JENNIFER KALMAKOFF died on her knees in an Uptown tenement—her head smashed by the downward plunge of an elevator car.

Curiosity had lured her to the opening in the elevator's broken door. She was only two years old and unprepared for survival in a slum where an elevator can be transformed into a guillotine.

Wiser by 77 years and many years of living in a slum, Mrs. Lillian Murray will not linger even a few seconds in the hazardous hallways that were Jennifer's playground.

FEAR IMPRISONS her in her apartment where she keeps her door locked and chained. She even suffered thru two of the coldest days of winter without heat before she summoned a repairman to fix the broken radiator.

Then her worst fears were realized when the repairman beat her, seeking what money she had.

Mrs. Murray has lived in this building since 1936 and has watched its transformation from a once stately hotel to a squalid slum. She remembers when trees lined Kenmore Avenue "high enough to shade the third floor windows," and maids brought fresh towels every day.

NOW A WALK thru that building at 4106 N. Kenmore

Task Force report

For four months, The Tribune's Pulitzer-Prize-winning Task Force investigated Chicago's 10 largest and most successful slumlords. This article, the third in a series, deals with the empire put together during the last few years on the North Side by the Gutman brothers.

The series was prepared and written by David Young, Task Force director, and reporters Pamela Zekman, Jerry Thornton and Robert Unger.



The Gutman brothers, Leon (left), Herman (center), and Max.

Av. with Lillian Murray offers a heartbreaking look at today's disintegrating Uptown.

"See that little room," she said. "That used to be an elaborate telephone switchboard. Now that room's bare and locked. We just do without."

She places the blame squarely on Leon Gutman.

The Gutman brothers—Leon,

Herman, and Max—are foremost among the slumlords now preying on the city's newest ghetto. Former furriers, the Polish-born brothers launched their careers as slumlords on the city's South Side in the '50s.

THERE THEY learned to milk buildings for profits. Court suits charge they then illegally fled unpaid mortgages

by dumping vacant, fire-ravaged shells back on former owners thru quitclaim deeds, a legal document surrendering all rights and responsibilities to the property.

In one case, Max Gutman explained to the surprised former owners, who by law are required to agree to the quitclaim, that the neighborhood had become so dangerous and the building so expensive that "the aggravation and strain on our nervous systems would fill volumes."

The Gutmans then moved their operations to Uptown where they now preside over dozens of rotting, rat-infested buildings. The weekly rents they personally collect for sparsely furnished apartments are sometimes more expensive than apartments on nearby Lake Shore Drive.

They commute daily from their comfortable Northwest Side homes to oversee their empire. Much of it is like a fortress with heavy, wire-backed doors and lobbies of forbidding cages in which tenant-managers dispense the mail and police the arrival of unwelcome visitors and inspectors.

THEIR TACTICS of neglect—the winters without heat, the dreaded spur of the moment evictions—have made the Gutmans and their wrath infamous.

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EXHIBIT 'E'
(13)

GUTMAN
BASE ONLY
MAY 8, 1973

Once-posh N. Side hotel now a death-trap for children

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mons among the denizens of Uptown.

"If I'd known this was a Gutman building I wouldn't have moved here," said Mrs. Geraldine Shirely, now a tenant for the third time in a Gutman-owned slum. "But I don't know where to look for another apartment. Gutman owns them all."

Tenants' hatred for the Gutmans is at least matched by the Gutmans' disdain for their tenants, mostly white Appalachians and American Indians. They deny responsibility for the deadly hazards that fill their slum buildings, as expressed by Max Gutman's statement to reporters: "Ethics is for you guys. You can't use ethics out here."

THRU WEEKS of interviews, living in Gutman buildings, and quietly accompanying the Gutmans to court, Task Force reporters looked inside the workings of a slum machine. They found it powered by greed, lubricated with arrogance, and producing despair, hatred, and human degradation.

An occasional by-product is death.

It has struck four times in Gutman buildings—and three times children were the victims.

Jennifer's mother, Irene Kalmakoff, has lived in Uptown since 1962 when she left her Wisconsin Indian reservation.

"FIRST we lived on the top floor, but there were no screens on the windows and I was afraid the children might fall out and be killed," she said, recalling what led to Jennifer's death last September 24. "I asked if I could move to the second floor and they let me."

"Guess it didn't do me any good. I lost her anyway."

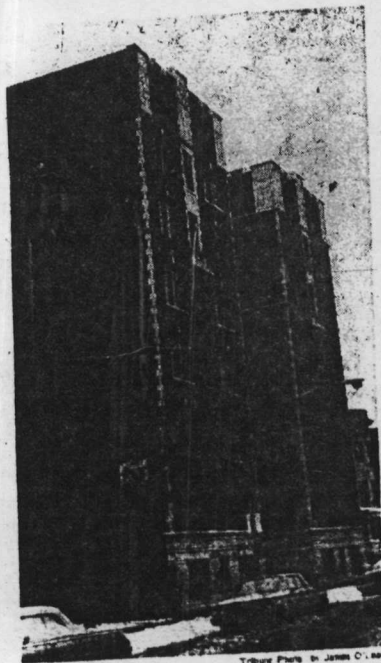
Leon Gutman was charged with criminal housing management after investigations into Jennifer's death disclosed that glass in the elevator door had been broken for several weeks. The prosecutor's action offers little comfort to Mrs. Kalmakoff who said she didn't know what she would do "to know what I ever see him again."

GUTMAN HAS yet to answer the charges in the formality of the courts, but his version of the story was circulated thru the building grapevine. A Tribune reporter living there was told, "She (Jennifer) was hit on the head with a bottle and carried to the elevator. They were all drunk. They're Indians, you know."

The messenger was a 16-year-old Gutman employee. Even before the inquest into Jennifer's death, another child was killed while lying in his crib in a building owned by Herman Gutman at 3717 N. Pine Grove Av.

ERIC BOY, 22 months old, was lying in his crib when the heat in the building came on for the first time Oct. 7. For six hours steam gushed into his tiny room thru an open pipe where a radiator once had stood. A pathologist later said he died of "extensive burns."

He had been scalded over 50



The exterior view at 4108 N. Kenmore Av. hides the misery inside the Gutman-owned slum building.

hosing authorities three times the week before his son died.

"ALL I REALLY wanted to know was if the radiator would be in before it got cold," he said. "If not, we'd move out. And there were other problems—a whole series of faulty wiring, leaks, all sorts of code violations."

Despite testimony at the inquest by police investigators, Herman Gutman insisted the missing radiator had nothing to do with the child's death.

"It's a case of parental neglect. . . . Couldn't it be that they put the thing in a box and forgot about it?" Gutman asked.

AUTHORITIES HAD already documented dozens of code violations existing at two other Gutman buildings when fires killed tenants.

In February, 1966, 3-year-old Betty MacDonald died of

burns suffered when a fire broke out in a building owned by Leon Gutman at 3333-34 W. Palmer St. At the time of the fire Gutman had ignored four-month-old notices from the city Building Department ordering him to correct 27 code violations.

Thirteen of them dealt strictly with the lack of fire prevention measures. A formal suit was not filed until 10 days after the fire.

THE EVENTS aroused a furor in the community and Gutman was summoned to a meeting before the Logan Square Neighborhood Association. He promised to bring the building into compliance, but as recently as November the roach-infested structure again was considered such a health hazard that a new suit, this time listing 24 serious violations, was filed.

On Nov. 11, fire and death came to one of the largest and (highest Gutman buildings, leav-

have continued to board up fire doors and block exits, some with barbed wire, to maintain security.

AFTER STEIN DIED, the building on Clarendon Avenue still had interior fire escapes boarded up at ground level. Exterior iron ladders emptied into a U-shaped courtyard and were blocked by a 10-foot hurricane fence. At 825 W. Eastwood Av. barbed wire strung across the fire escape kept vandals out and residents in.

"It was to keep people from going up on the roof and throwing rocks," Herman Gutman explained. "Besides, no one ever told me it was a violation."

The mood was anger, and the Gutmans were the object. Most vocal and active were members of Rising Up Angry, young people whose relentless pursuit of the Gutmans has resulted in a combined crackdown by city and county housing and public aid authorities.

THEIR LOUD complaints and occasional browbeating of officials, inspectors, and even judges has resulted in accelerated action, including nine housing suits in the first three months of this year. Cook County Department of Public Aid is withholding their recipients' rent payments on 34 Gutman buildings, totaling \$42,621.41 in monthly rents.

The Gutmans have been sued 43 times by the city in the past three years for violations in 35 buildings, but vehemently deny they are slumlords.

"We are hard working peo-

ple. We continually try to build and not destroy," Herman Gutman said. "We are making a living. I am interested in the challenge of managing and sometimes I can make a few dollars."

AS A RESULT of city and community pressure, the Gutmans began a "clean-up" campaign in many of their buildings. The effort quickly was dubbed a farce by Rising Up Angry and the charge was echoed by numerous tenants.

"They only worked after the little girl (Jennifer Kalmakoff) was killed," Mrs. Murray said. "Nothing before and little since."

Mrs. Murray remembers the clean-up vividly because the repairman who beat her had come to Gutman just one month out of Stateville Prison, eager to earn rock bottom wages others would not be willing to accept.

As part of their announced clean-up, the Gutmans have slapped on gallons of paint, often over layers of lead-based paint removed. There have been 18 reported cases of lead poisoning in Gutman buildings in the past three years, some of which occurred after lead paint violations had been dismissed from housing suits as "fully completed."

THREE-YEAR-old Kaitlin Culver was rushed to Children's Memorial Hospital with lead poisoning from her home at 4138 N. Clarendon Av. in late 1971. A year earlier, a city suit demanding removal of lead paint compounds in the building had been dismissed

when "evidence was heard of full compliance."

Seven children suffered from lead poisoning from 1969 thru 1972 in the apartment building owned by Max Gutman at 4107 N. Broadway. Four were poisoned after a court ordered him to remove old painted-over wallpaper.

Gutman claimed his paint wasn't the poison: "You know where they get it? They (the children) eat dog—[manure]."

A TRIBUNE reporter ostensibly seeking an apartment for his family, which includes a 5-year-old boy, found wallpaper had been painted over repeatedly and was curled and peeling from baseboards and door frames. Chips of paper—and the paint—were everywhere.

Max Gutman, personally, showing the apartment, wore a torn sweater, crumpled hat, and badly worn coat and said he was working on the building.

The reporter complained about the dilapidated condition of the furniture. The dining apartment featured a three-legged end table, a couch broken in the middle, and a chair covered with a blanket to hide the holes.

"It's there. You can sit on it. So it's usable," Gutman said.

For all that, Gutman said, the reporter would only have to pay \$125 a month. What he didn't talk about, however, was a recent housing suit, the last in a string of three in three years, which cited the

rat-and roach-infested building with extensive code violations that should require practically a total renovation.

THE SAME MAN discussed the same building a few weeks later after an unsuccessful bid to get the suit dismissed and to get withheld Public Aid rents paid.

"I'm ruined, I'm ruined," he sobbed as he leaned against a wall outside the courtroom. "I'll lose everything, my house, my family."

His wife, meanwhile, tried to convince those around her that Gutman wasn't at fault.

"My husband's going to have a heart attack," Estelle Gutman said. "I know they'll drive him to it. He tries to fix things."

HIS BROTHER Herman made an equally emotional plea, this time inside the courtroom, under threat of losing March's rent from Public Aid in a building he owns at

4301 N. Sheridan Rd. Clutching a long list of itemized code violations, he swore that he "did all the work that was needed. I handled it (the inspection sheet) like a religious man handles a Bible."

Gutman began throwing receipts at unimpressed Judge Louis Wexler, who promptly threw them back. Quickly turning meek, Gutman said, "I just want to show you this so maybe someone can get an idea what Herman Gutman is."

BUT THAT, perhaps, was best described by a long-time associate of Gutman.

"You're impossible to talk to," the associate told Herman Gutman during a recess in the case. "You're only interested in one thing."

"You're only interested in making money."

Tomorrow: How they make their money—The Sinsford's Manual.

Doctor kills 3 kin, then self

DALLAS, May 7 (UPI)—A doctor who was in bad health fatally shot three of his children and then killed himself last night, police reported today. The doctor's wife and one child were hospitalized with multiple bullet wounds.

The doctor, Waldemar F. Henninger Jr., 48, lived with his family in a swank two-story house in northern Dallas. His wife, Marlene, 48, also a doctor, was shot in the chest

and three times in the back, but managed to telephone for help.

The Hennigers were both anesthesiologists who worked together in an office near Baylor Hospital. Mrs. Henniger was in critical condition and her only surviving child, John, 7, was in serious condition. The children killed were John's twin brother Mark, Mary Frances, 9, and Teresa, 6. They were all shot thru the chest.